

# HENRY BALNAVES AND THE SCOTTISH REFORMATION

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It may well be asserted when this paper has been read, that it does not conform to its title, that in it no attempt has been made to describe and to evaluate the whole impact of Balnaves on the work of Reformation in Scotland. So let me forestall the complaint by letting it be known at the outset that what I have set before myself as a task is something simpler and less ambitious ; it is to analyse and assess his main contribution—indeed, strictly speaking, his only contribution—to the literature of the Reformation, and to deal with his career only in so far as it affects and concerns his written work.

## I

By far the best account of the life of Balnaves is that given by David Laing in the third volume of his edition of the works of John Knox, published in 1854. Twenty years later, Dr. Charles Rogers, in his monograph entitled *Three Scottish Reformers* restated more briefly Laing's main conclusions and added a few new references. But the still later article in the *Dictionary of National Biography* is a somewhat perfunctory performance, suggesting, e.g., dates for his birth and death which seem to indicate complete oblivion of the work that David Laing had done. It assigns as his birth-year some year after 1513, whereas his incorporation in December, 1527, in St Salvator's College, St Andrews, as Magister<sup>1</sup> entails a date some ten years earlier. Calderwood suggests<sup>2</sup> that this Master's degree was from the University of Cologne, and, though I have failed to find his name in the published Matriculation Register of that University, there is no reason to doubt his early studies in the Rhineland. The article further suggests 1579 as the date of his death, but there is sound, and indeed incontrovertible, documentary evidence in Laing's Introduction for the year 1570.

Trained in the law, he rose in 1538 to be a Lord of Session, and in 1543, in the regency of Arran, he occupied for a time the high office of Secretary, in which position he showed himself openly as a reformer and a keen supporter of alliance with England. Few Lords of Session, in the long

<sup>1</sup> *Early Records Univ. St. Andrews*, p. 225.

<sup>2</sup> Calderwood : *History* (Wodrow ed.), I, 158.

history of that office, can have experienced the rude interruption of their duties which befell Balnaves during the end of 1543 and the beginning of 1544. "From the bench to Blackness Prison, and from Blackness back to the bench" might be the headline for these eventful months. Within six months of the murder of Cardinal Beaton he left Edinburgh, abandoning his judicial work, and threw in his lot with the garrison in St. Andrews. He was one of those who took part in calling John Knox to the ministry, and in August, 1547, was one of the six score who were carried off to France as prisoners. He did not return to Scotland till the eve of the Reformation. In the year of crisis he was prominent as a leader, particularly in the complex negotiations with England. On the occurrence of a vacancy in 1563, he was restored to his seat on the bench, and the Register of the Privy Council reveals him, after Mary's deposition, a diligent and active member of that body.

On two separate occasions Balnaves rendered conspicuous service to the cause of the Reformation. One was in 1543, when Knox records, in connection with the permission given by Parliament to use a vernacular version of the Bible—"Ressoned for the party of the Secularis, the Lord Ruthven . . . a stout and discreat man in the cause of God, and Maister Henrie Balnevis, ane old professour"<sup>1</sup> (i.e., an adherent of the reformation from its early days). Knox evidently regarded him as one of the main instruments in that "no small victorie of Christ Jesus."<sup>2</sup> The other was in 1559, in November of that year, when the Lords of the Congregation were forced to withdraw from Edinburgh and to separate into two groups. During this emergency, Knox himself was appointed to act as secretary and intelligence officer to the Eastern group, and Balnaves acted in a similar capacity to the Western. These, and the numerous negotiations with England with which he was constantly entrusted, indicate the kind of services he rendered, and the esteem in which he was held by his brethren of the reformed faith.

But I do not intend to dwell any longer on facts which can be read in a volume so easily accessible as Laing's *Knox*, III, 405-30: the only point in his career with which I wish to deal is one on which Laing is somewhat vague and uncertain. There are six years concerning which he says nothing, the years 1550-6, that is to say, from the time of his release from his imprisonment in France until the time when the Scottish Parliament opened up the way for his return, by rescinding the forfeiture pronounced in 1548. We know that John Knox went from the galleys to his work in England: we know, mainly from Knox, what happened to one or two of his fellow-prisoners. Is there any light, since Laing's day, on what happened to Balnaves, or was there anything which that accurate scholar had missed? The one new thing known to me is a letter

<sup>1</sup> Laing's *Knox*, I, 99.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, I, 100.

published in 1927 in "The Scottish Correspondence of Mary of Lorraine," pp. 404-6, a letter which Balnaves addressed to the Queen Regent in August, 1555. It is dated from Paris, where Balnaves could easily have learned that the moment was opportune for overtures for his return and even for employment in the Regent's service. It is, unfortunately, only a general covering letter accompanying "certane instructiouns heir within closed to informe your heighnes privatlie be your self, and to be wsit at sick tymes as your grace sall think expedient, as the tyme servis." He is anxious that the Regent should not reveal "quhome of ye have this informatione." He is particularly grateful for kindness shown to that poor woman, his wife, and hopes to show himself thankful "for that maist gentill clemencie I have ressavit and hopes to receive at your grace handes." The letter on the surface reads as though Balnaves were preparing to change sides in order to end his long exile, but news must have come through to Paris that the Regent in Scotland was now favouring the Protestants, or Balnaves knew from the French Court that instructions to that effect had been sent to her, for the prayer at the end of the letter, while indubitably loyal, demonstrates that his Protestant fervour had not abated. This letter, therefore, places Balnaves in Paris in August, 1555.

Now, let us recall in the light of this a fact already known. The will of Henry Balnaves begins as follows:—"In the first, The said Maister Henry constitut his sone adoptive, James Melvill, his only Executour and intronettour with his haille movable gudis."<sup>1</sup> How did James Melvill—the Sir James of the *Memoirs*—come to be his adopted son? There are indications that Balnaves owed not a little, in his early days, to the kindly interest and patronage of James' father, Sir John Melvill of Raith, and Laing says that "this benefit was ultimately repaid by his constituting one of that family heir to his property of Halhill."<sup>2</sup> In making this general statement, he was overlooking the fact that the adopted son himself had something to say on this matter; for, of his commission to Scotland in 1559 to find out whether the "bastard son of James V, called prior de St André," was really intriguing for the Scottish throne, he writes thus: "I laid myself wholly out to be informed, if my Lord James intended, as was reported of him, to make himself king. Mr. Henry Balnaves was then in great credit with him and loved me as I had been his own son, by reason of some acquaintance I had with him in France, and small services I had done him there, during his banishment."<sup>3</sup> So Henry Balnaves, in making James Melvill his adopted son and heir, was not only repaying a debt to the father, but was recognising services rendered by the son in France. Now, the son had gone to France in 1550, in his fifteenth year, having been sent by Mary of Lorraine that he might act as

<sup>1</sup> Laing's *Knox*, III, 429.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, III, 406.

<sup>3</sup> *Memoirs*, Abbey Classics ed., 30.



a page of honour to her daughter Mary. He was sent in the company of the Bishop of Valence, and for three years he remained in his service ; and then, in 1553, through an unexpected turn of events which he recounts at length, his allegiance was transferred to the Constable, Montmorency. If we can trust his narrative, he stood high in the affection of both masters, and though both were redoubtable adherents of the old Church, in the tangled politics of the time when the fluctuating struggles of France with the Empire and Spain necessitated a change of relation to the Papacy every other year, it was quite intelligible for either or both to have helped, at Melvill's request, so unmistakeable a Protestant as Henry Balnaves. Indeed, if he had been a fighting man, he might have found congenial service in the armies of France at this time ; he might even have been among the notable band of Scotsmen who fought for France, in the troops of the Constable, at Renty. Where precisely he was, and how he employed himself during the six years between his release and his return, we may never know, but the new evidence of the letter, and the definite statement of the adopted son, lead us to the conclusion that he spent these years somewhere in France, within range of reliable news from Scotland.

## II

After these few notes on his public career, we turn to his published work. I pass over the poem ascribed to him in the Bannatyne MS., of which Mr Tod Ritchie has given us the authentic text in his edition published for the Scottish Text Society in 1928, for, though it bears the impress of an earnest and enlightened spirit, it sheds no light on his religious position. His one specifically religious work, though commonly referred to as Balnaves on Justification, was published with this title-page : The Confession of Faith, conteining how the troubled man should seeke refuge at his God, Thereto led by faith : with the declaratiõ of the article of justification at length. The order of good workes, which are the fruites of faith : And how the faithful, and justified man, should walke and liue, in the perfite, and true Christian religion, according to his vocation. Compiled by M. Henry Balnaues of Halhill, and one of the Lords of session, and Counsell of Scotland, being as prisoner within the old pallaice of Roane. In the yeare of our Lord, 1548. Direct to his faithfull brethren, being in like trouble or more. And to all true professours and favours of the syncere worde of God. Act 1. Hab. 2. Rom. 10. He shall come, and shall not tary, in whome who beleeeve, shall not be confounded. Imprinted at Edinburgh, by Thomas Vautrollier. 1584."<sup>1</sup> The original edition is a small octavo of 244 numbered pages, followed by 32 unnumbered pages, containing the summary. And the best reprint is that

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Laing's *Knox*, III, 431, for a reproduction of the title-page.

of David Laing in the third volume of his edition of Knox, where title-page, printer's dedication, and the body of the treatise are to be found on pp. 431-542, while Knox's own contributions to it are to be found on pp. 5-28. Comparison has shown this reprint to be scrupulously faithful, though, naturally, the comparatively modern inverted commas are substituted for the older quotation marks of the original, brackets in some cases, and italics in others. In a few cases also, quotation marks have been supplied, where obviously intended: and in places the punctuation has been altered, always to its improvement. I noted only one change of text:—a probable misprint of the original, which God forbid, having been altered to the more familiar, which God forbid (p. 499). In this study I have used Laing's reprint, and also the handy edition of 1831 which, however, has modernised the spelling throughout.

### III

Concerning the origin of this work, we have two accounts by Knox. The earlier is contained in the *Epistle to the Congregation of St Andrews*,<sup>1</sup> the commendatory preface which accompanied the work itself, and the later in his *History of the Reformation*.<sup>2</sup> The value of this latter is that it gives a glimpse into the conditions of Balnaves' imprisonment, showing him engaged in disputations with selected champions of the Papacy and, in virtue of his learning and the power of God's Spirit, confounding them in debate, and finally, writing this treatise in his prison. The former is so important that it must be quoted *in extenso*. "And how that ur mercifull Father, amongst these tempestuous stormes, by all men's expectation, he hath provided some rest for us, as this present Worke shall testifie: which was sent to mee in Roane, lying in irons, and sore troubled by corporall infirmitie, in a galley named *Nostre Dame*, by an honourable man and faithfull Christian brother, M. Henry Balnaves, of Halhill, for the present holden as prisoner (though unjustly) in the old Pallaice of Roane. Which worke, after I had once again read, to the great comfort and consolation of my spirite, by counsell and advise of the foresaid noble and faithfull man, authour of the same Worke, I thought expedient it should be digested in chapters: and to the better memory of the Reader, the contents of every chapter preponed briefly unto them, with certaine annotations, to the more instruction of the simple, in the margent. And also that an Epitome of the same work should be shortly collected, wee have likewise digested the same in chapters, which follow the worke in place of a Table: Which thing I have done, as imbecillitie of ingine and incommoditie of place would permit."

Here we have a picture of Balnaves, in strict ward, yet conscious of a greater freedom than others of his fellow-countrymen (which appears in

<sup>1</sup> Laing's *Knox*, III, 8, 9.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, I, 226-7.

the title-page, "Direct to his faithfull brethren, who are in like trouble, or more") compiling (for this is all he claims on the same title-page) a statement of his position on the central doctrine of justification by faith and its implications, his mind having been clarified by the above-mentioned enforced disputations: and of Knox, shackled and worn out to the extent of feeling himself mentally sluggish and inert, preparing it for the press and for transmission to Scotland. Composed by one man in prison, revised by another in irons in the galleys—surely few writings have come through equal birth-pangs!

But are these the only references to this work in Knox? I think not. Earlier in his *History*, in connection with his disputations in St Andrews which immediately preceded his captivity, he says: "How Johne Knox answered that, and many other thingis, him self did witness in a treatise that he wrate in the gallayis, conteanyng the some of his doctrin, and confessioun of his fayth, and send it to his familiaris in Scotland: with his exhortatioun, that thei should continew in the trewth, which thei had professed, notwithstanding any worldly adversitie that mycht ensew thareof."<sup>1</sup> All authorities seem to agree that the treatise here referred to has been lost. I submit that the prefatory epistle carefully studied demonstrates this work of Balnaves to be the missing document. For, not only is Knox vehement in his demand that his brethren in Scotland read the treatise, he is thrilled with joy and wonder at the thought of his being able to make through it, in the Providence of God, an adequate public acknowledgement of what the Gospel means to him. "O blessed bee thou, Eternall Father! which by thy only mercy hast preserved us to this day, and provided that the Confession of our Faith (which ever wee desired all men to have knowen) should by this treatise come plainely to light."<sup>2</sup> It is obvious from this that he accepts Balnaves' Confession as his own. It is even more obvious in an earlier paragraph where he says that what he has done in the way of preparing the treatise for publication was undertaken "not so much to illustrate the Worke (which in the self is godly and perfite) as, together with the foresaid noble man and faithfull Brother, to give my Confession of the article of Justification therein contained. And I beseech you, beloved Brethren, earnestly to consider if we deny any thing presently (i.e., in this present work), or yet conceale or hide, which any time before we professed in that Article."<sup>3</sup> In thus making Balnaves' Confession his own, in appealing to its entire consistency with what he had taught in St. Andrews, and in sending it to the congregation to which he had ministered, was he not justified in referring to it later as the Confession of his faith? And is not even the accompanying exhortation, which he recalled when writing his history,

<sup>1</sup> Laing's *Knox*, I, 200-1.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, III, 9.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, III, 9.



to be found in these words of the prefatory epistle, "Therefore, most deare Brethren (so call I all professing Christes Evangell), continue in that purpose which yee have begunne godly ; though the battell appeare strong, your Captaine is inexpugnable : To him is given all power in heaven and earth. Abide, stand, and call for his support ; and so the ennemies, which now affraye you, shortly shal be confounded, and never againe shall appeare to molest you."<sup>1</sup>

Not a few further minor indications could be adduced all converging on the same point, but I pass them over and content myself with saying that close examination has convinced that here we have John Knox's Confession of his faith, long lamented as lost. To those who are reluctant to admit, despite the explicit words, that Knox could ever have adopted another man's writing as his own, may I add that it seems to me that Knox's share in the actual work may have been greater than the title-page would indicate. The word *again* quoted above in "Which worke, after I had once again read" (p. 27), may easily apply to an earlier draft, or earlier drafts, of the treatise. There is here a hint of what we might have expected, that Knox was more than once consulted during its preparation.

#### IV

The treatise, having been made ready for the press and sent to Scotland in 1548, was not published, so far as we know, until 1584. What happened to the Manuscript? Knox's one reference is: "how it is suppressed, we know nott."<sup>2</sup> Could no printer be found to print it? Or, when a few friends had read it, did they consider it inopportune to put forth a work which would increase the difficulties and dangers of their position, and send it for safe custody to some of Knox's early friends in East Lothian? It is clear that Knox had no idea as to its fate, and it was not until some years after his death that his faithful servitor, Richard Bannatyne, found it in the hands of a child at Ormiston in East Lothian. He took it to Vautrollier, a French refugee, who had recently come to Scotland and set up a printing press, who published it with a prefatory dedication of his own to the lady of Ormiston. Thus, despite the urgency and expectation with which it was despatched from Rouen, it was thirty-six years before it saw the full light of day.

Though this original edition is a creditable piece of work, there is an occasional misreading of the Manuscript. And since Laing's edition is a faithful reproduction even of the mistakes, I am going to give references to it throughout. On p. 469 (margin) we find Rom. 2 ; on pp. 478, 480, 482, and 487, Heb. 2 ; on pp. 479-80 "second chapter to the Hebrews."

<sup>1</sup> Laing's *Knox*, III, 10.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, I, 227.

In all the cases, the references are really to the eleventh chapters. And in view of the general accuracy<sup>1</sup> of the other Scripture references, the obvious conclusion is that Balnaves' way of writing eleven and eleventh was misread by the printer. At only one other point did the suspicion of a wrong transcription occur to me—the use of the word “recent” on p. 450, but the use of a similar phrase, “recent in memorie,” on p. 539, showed that this word was intended, in the sense of “ever fresh.” I take Vautrollier, therefore, to have been a thoroughly careful and conscientious printer, and the text of 1584 to represent faithfully the document written in prison in Rouen.

One interesting feature may fitly be mentioned at this point. In the body of the work there are singularly few reflections of the situation of the author at the moment. Only in the eleventh chapter is the reference prominent. He is dealing with the assaults made by our adversary, Satan, against the church of God in all the times both of the old dispensation and the new. “Therefore,” he says, he “hath provoked them to pursue this article more cruelly then ever it was pursued from the beginning of the worlde. Them selves by worde confessinge the same with their mouth, reading, singing, and, of their maner, dayly teaching and preaching the same. And yet, neverthesse, dayly burning, killing and banishing the true faithful preachers of the said article and confessours thereof.”<sup>2</sup> There is one other short reference in the sixth chapter: “Therefore they thinke they punish justly, in birning, slaying, banishing, and confisking of landes and goodes.”<sup>3</sup> Perhaps it is not remarkable that Knox, in his summary, sees many more such references. The word “tribulation” appears in his summaries of the first, third, and fourth chapters which seem to the modern reader to be singularly devoid of all references to the situation, and might have been written in the peace and quiet of a Scottish study.

## V

In the matter of style, most of those who have commented on it deny it any merit. Dr. Stalker says, “even these additions of Knox fail to give the work much distinction, and we cannot help regretting that he did not write on the subject himself.”<sup>4</sup>

It seems to me that three things foster this impression. The first is, that it deals so briefly with so many of the aspects and implications of justification. It savours of the compilation it professes to be, rather than of the glowing apologetic one might expect to find. The second is, that so much

<sup>1</sup> There is on p. 533 one exception—an apparent confusion between the Bereans and the Thessalonians. Or did Balnaves take Berea to be a suburb of Thessalonica?

<sup>2</sup> Laing's *Knox*, III, 458-9.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, III, 448.

<sup>4</sup> Stalker: *John Knox*, p. 145.



of it is quotation of, and reference to, relevant Scripture passages : and since most of the exegesis is perfectly familiar to us, it has the dulness of many a bygone sermon, overloaded with Scripture proofs. We have lost the thrill which came to those to whom this exegesis was novel and indeed revolutionary. I cannot imagine that anyone in Scotland in 1548, or even 1584, would find it lifeless. It would bring unmixed joy to some, and goad others to fury. The third thing is the use of so many words which, in those days when the vernacular was growing by the incorporation of Latin elements, never passed the experimental stage, and failed to establish themselves on a permanent footing. Balnaves' language is much more latinised and much less racy of the soil than Knox's, especially the familiar parts of Knox, his *History* and his *Letters*. Some of the words he uses had a temporary vogue among a certain class of educated writers both sides of the border : others became accepted in a different form from his. A few samples may be given :—blasphematioun, prefined, preordinate, confisk, coumpt, perauthor, promission, impeditie, acception, oincted, and remord. It is much easier to read Balnaves than some contemporary experimenters. He is not a deliberate innovator. But his style and even his vocabulary lack the pungency of the best writers of his time.

These are enough to deprive Balnaves of any high place in the history of Scottish literature : they do not disqualify him as a leading exponent of the doctrines of the Reformation. For he could express his meaning with precision, and I have no doubt that Knox felt (and we have no real grounds on which to challenge his impression) that both his method, which to us is tedious, and his medium, though to us pedantic, were soundly adapted to his purpose.

## VI

That purpose was theological and religious. It was to expound to the leaderless reformers in Scotland the doctrines for which their leaders were suffering and by which they ought to stand. Rightly there was put in the centre the deep positive personal experience which gave the movement life, "the heart's utter trust in Christ"—the assurance of having found peace with God, apart from any human mediation, through unfaltering reliance on the saving energies of the divine grace, gathered up and revealed in Jesus Christ—justification by faith alone. And so we are not surprised to find that all the editions of Balnaves emphasise by their printing this manifestly crucial passage in the sixth chapter : "By these considerations moved, I thought necessarie for my owne erudition and for your confort, my welbeloved brethren, to declare and forth show my beliefe concerning THE ARTICLE OF JUSTIFICATION, as the scriptures teaches mee, having no respect to man's opinion, that thereby

we may have consolation through our mutuall faith, and be more ready to give coumpt and reaking to all which aske of us any question of our faith.”<sup>1</sup> But, although everything that goes before leads up to this article, and all that comes after is developed from it, to call it a treatise on justification is to give an unduly limited notion of its scope. It lives up to the title-page already quoted, and the final section on “And how the faithful, and justified man, should walke and live, in the perfite, and true Christian religion, according to his vocation,” is, in some ways, the most varied and interesting of them all.

Now, Dr M’Crie, in a note at the end of his *Life of Knox*<sup>2</sup> rightly drew attention to the harmony which existed among the reformers as to this important doctrine. “On some questions,” he wrote, respecting the sacraments, and the external government and worship of the Church, they differed: but upon the article of free justification, Luther and Zuinglius, Melancthon and Calvin, Cranmer and Knox spoke the very same language.” But M’Crie went a step further than this. He continued thus: “This was not owing to their having read one another’s writings, but because they copied from the same Divine original.” In this, although, be it noted, he was not asserting that they did not read one another’s writings, he was making too sweeping a claim of independence. Men looked at Scripture with other eyes after they had read Martin Luther. Old forgotten meanings—new to that generation—leapt from its pages to grip mind and heart. And once the right attitude to Scripture was re-discovered, it was natural that the later reformers should attribute to their study of Scripture alone, what they certainly would never have seen with such vividness, but for the pioneer work of Luther. M’Crie goes on to quote selections from this work, as though they contained the results of the joint reflections on Scripture alone, of Balnaves and Knox—an assumption quite wide of the mark, as I hope to show. For though the great reformers were agreed on this doctrine, their treatment, their approach and their emphasis were all different. It would not be hard for a trained theologian, confronted with typical passages from the works of Luther, Zwingli and Calvin, agreeing completely in doctrine, to say which of the three had written them. And if a passage from Balnaves, a typical passage, were smuggled in among the others, I have no doubt that he would at once ascribe it to Martin Luther. Precisely the same doctrine would have been approached from another angle, and stated in other terms, by one trained in the school of Zwingli or of Calvin. It was this fact which filled me with the desire to discover, what M’Crie would never have dreamt of looking for, its sources.

<sup>1</sup> Laing’s *Knox*, III, 449.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*: Note O, p. 331, ed. 1884.

## VII

In this connection I begin by acknowledging that I did not find what I expected to find.

Remembering that Balnaves was almost certainly in St Andrews during Patrick Hamilton's brief ministry, I expected to note echoes of *Patrick's Places*. But though I found such on pp. 485, 494, 495 and 514, none of them were definite enough to be unmistakeable. I hoped also to find signs of acquaintance with James Melvill's *Certamen cum Lutheranis*, but, though a case could be made for references to that mysterious tract on pp. 500 and 502, where there is a remarkable degree of coincidence in argument and language, the passages are among the least distinctive, and might well be the reflection of one of his own disputations on the stock anti-Lutheran passages.

Then, remembering that Balnaves had been one of the chief instruments in obtaining legal sanction for the reading of a vernacular Bible in Scotland, I thought it would be a simple matter to discover which English version he was accustomed to use himself. I rather suspected Tyndale's since Knox had called him "ane old professour." But here I met with complete disappointment. I found identity only in places where, owing to the plainness of the original, all the early English versions had practically the same rendering.

And finally, remembering that Balnaves had passed his youth in the Rhineland, at a time when the early treatises of Luther were being read and discussed everywhere, I expected to find quotations from Luther's Primary Works. I did find phrases and thoughts reminiscent of them, especially of *The Liberty of a Christian Man*, but not enough to prove dependence. Throughout the work, although he makes some hundreds of Biblical quotations, three from the Apocrypha, and eight from the Christian fathers (six from Augustine, one from Chrysostom, and one from Bernard), Martin Luther is never mentioned, nor is any work of his directly named or cited.

It was at this point that I began to realise that I had framed my expectations without taking all the factors into account. I had neglected to make adequate allowance for the situation in which the book was written. What had already appeared on closer examination drove me to visualise afresh the position of the author. He himself was in prison; his reviser was in the galleys. Books were not to be had in the galleys, and presumably could only be obtained with difficulty, and after careful scrutiny, in the prison. But Balnaves was being badgered about his faith continually. Anyone in his position must have longed for books, and would have demanded books if these discussions were to continue. If we ask ourselves what books such demands were likely to produce, we can answer with certainty that there would be no works of Luther, no



translations of the Bible emanating from heretical England ; but probably no objections would be raised to an approved edition of the Bible, and certainly none to standard editions of selected Fathers and Doctors of the Church who were held to be above suspicion. This would account for the fact that all the actual acknowledged quotations are either from Scripture or from recognised ancient authorities.

What had driven me to re-envision the situation was a puzzling feature that had emerged in regard to the Scripture quotations. I was using Bagster's convenient *English Hexapla* and comparing the various New Testament texts in Balnaves with the English versions, even with the Genevan which, although published long after Balnaves wrote, might conceivably have been used by an Edinburgh printer to correct his texts. Occasionally my eye strayed to the second column on the right hand page where the text of the Rheims New Testament is reprinted. And, to my astonishment, I found that Balnaves' versions coincided with it more frequently than with any of the others. This seemed inexplicable, for the Rheims New Testament did not appear until 1582, and it was not likely that a Protestant printer would adjust Balnaves' texts to that Roman Catholic version. Then the probable explanation flashed upon me ; while all the other early English translations, from Tyndale's onwards, were from the Greek, the Rheims New Testament was from the Vulgate. Could it be that Balnaves was making a translation of his own from the Vulgate, aided, it might be, by his memory of other translations? And was it not probable that the Vulgate would be the only text within his reach in his imprisonment ? Would any other text, in fact, have been supplied to an argumentative heretic who demanded a copy of the Scriptures ? I proceeded to put this to the test, and found that there was no doubt on the matter. I began to notice the habit Balnaves had of supplying two or three alternative renderings of a doubtful word or phrase which indicated a man translating for himself and groping for the right equivalent. In every case it was evident that the text thus sought to be interpreted was that of the Vulgate. Take these two crucial instances :— in Rom. 3, 25 the Vulgate reads, “ quem proposuit Deus propitiationem per fidem in sanguine ejus.” Balnaves' rendering (p. 481) is, “ whom God hath proponed or laid before a sacrifice or satisfaction by faith in his blood.” And not one of the four words occurs in any English version from the Greek. Then in Rom. 11, 31 the Vulgate reads, “ O altitudo divitiarum sapientiae et scientiae Dei.” Balnaves' rendering is, “ O highnes ! O deepenes ! O profoundnes ! (three different renderings of altitudo) of the riches, of the knowledge, and of the wisdom of God : ” (p. 469) where riches, wisdom and knowledge are all parallel, a tenable interpretation of the Vulgate, whereas the English versions from the Greek all make knowledge and wisdom parallel and both dependent on riches.

These two cases might be held to be conclusive, but it may be well to append some others from other parts of Scripture. Heb. 11, 1, *Est autem fides sperandarum substantia rerum, argumentum non apparentium* (Vulgate). "Faith is the substance of things hoped or looked for, the argument or matter of things not seen" (Balnaves, p. 478). Eph. 2, 9, *Non e operibus, ut nequis gloriatur* (Vulgate). "Not of workes that none have matter to glorie or rejoyse" (Balnaves, p. 484). Lc 5, 52, *Non veni vocare justos, sed peccatores ad poenitentiam* (Vulgate): "Not to call them that are just, or think themselves just, but to call sinners to repentance" (Balnaves, p. 492). John 3, 17: *Non enim misit Deus filium suum in mundum, ut judicat mundum* (Vulgate): "God sent not his son into the world that he should condemn, accuse, or judge the world" (Balnaves, p. 493). Ps. 129, 3: *Quis sustinebit* (Vulgate): "who shall sustain or abide" (Balnaves, p. 463). Rom. 3, 23: *Omnes enim peccaverunt et egent gloria dei* (Vulgate); "All have sinned, and have neede, or are destitute, of the glory of God" (Balnaves, p. 463).

These, the most noteworthy, are fully representative of many other instances I have gathered, and the mere process of collecting and sifting this mass of Scripture references has made me certain (for it can hardly be regarded as a possible alternative that Balnaves knew the Vulgate by heart) that Balnaves had access to a copy of the Vulgate while he was writing his treatise, and that, although the memory of vernacular versions he had read in Scotland may have suggested a particular rendering here and there, it was the Vulgate that was the basis of his Reformation exegesis.

### VIII

The settlement of this problem indicated that the solution to the main question in my mind when I embarked on this research was probably unattainable. If Balnaves had before him only books supplied by his gaolers or his opponents in disputations, he would have access to no works of Martin Luther or of any of his "disciples or favourers," and all that might be expected was a kind of diffused similarity to Luther's arguments such as I had already found to Patrick Hamilton's *Places*, James Melvill's *Certamen*, and Martin Luther's *Liberty of a Christian Man*. Could anything more conclusive than this be looked for in the circumstances? I felt sure that if anything more definite were to be discovered, it would be by means of that notable phrase which is repeated, in whole or in part, no fewer than seven times in Chapters 9-11:—"Let Abell die and Cain live: this is our law, sayeth the ungodly." But a search through all Luther's commentaries, expositions, and sermons on the early chapters of Genesis failed to reveal it. It was in pursuit of a totally different reference that I finally came across it, in one of Luther's greatest

and most familiar works—in the Preface to his final commentary on Galatians where, in dealing with the continual malice of the Devil against the faithful, instigating agents in every generation to persecute them, he says, “Pereat Habel, vivat Cain. Haec esto lex nostra.”<sup>1</sup> Two claims in relation to this can be made with all confidence. The first is, that here we have an unmistakeable quotation. Though the thought might have occurred to two people independently, it would have found different expressions. The second is, that this is precisely the kind of phrase that would recur to the mind of one undergoing persecution, and remain there as a consolation and comfort in trying times, since it brought him into the fellowship of suffering with all faithful souls from the very beginning of time.

It was now established as probable that Balnaves had read the commentary on the Galatians. At this point it was impossible to affirm anything more than probability, in view of the possibilities (a) that some other member of the group had used the phrase to Balnaves to cheer him up, (b) that some preacher, borrowing from Luther, had used it, in Balnaves’ hearing, in a discourse, and (c) that Martin Luther himself had used the phrase in some earlier work which I had failed to locate, and Balnaves or his informant might have found it there. But the use being probable, it was obviously the next step to see if there were any further coincidences in thought and expression. This I cannot claim to have done with any approach to completeness, but there are certainly sufficient to justify the conclusion that here we have the main source, or at least, one of the main sources of Balnaves’ arguments and contentions. With your permission, I shall indicate a few. In chapter XII Balnaves has a brief dissertation on the various inadequate forms of righteousness, the Politike or Civill Justice, the Ceremoniall Justice, the Justice of the Law Morall : in the argument prefixed to the exposition, Luther had, *Justitia politica, ceremonialis, and legalis seu decalogi*.<sup>2</sup> And in the definition and description of Ceremoniall Justice, Balnaves holds so closely to Luther as to make his exposition seem almost a quotation in parts. Commenting on Gal. 3, 23, Luther has a long and careful excursus on the case of Cornelius in which he deals with the objections brought against his teaching based on the narrative of the conversion of Cornelius in the Acts of the Apostles : in his 20th chapter, Balnaves treats of the same case, using precisely the same arguments, though not in precisely the same order. There is a very close correspondence between Balnaves’ answer to the case for the merit of works, “put forth by the adversaries of faith” in that same 20th chapter, and that of Luther in an excursus<sup>4</sup> on Gal. 2, 16, entitled, in the old English translation, *The Divinity of the Popish Sophisters*. The

<sup>1</sup> Weimar ed., XL, i, 34.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, XL, i, 40.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, XL, i, 337-340.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, XL, i, 220.



description of the "two kinds of godly vocations" chapter XXIV is distinctly reminiscent of Luther's exposition of Gal. 1, 1.<sup>1</sup> Although Balnaves has given it a more legal form and greater precision, his description of the four special vocations of man in chapter XXV is that of Luther in his excursus on Gal. 5, 19,<sup>2</sup> entitled *Who be rightly called Saints, and be so indeed*. Balnaves' answer to the objection that justification by faith alone was contrary to Gal. 5, 6 (faith which worketh by love) is a manifest condensation of the argument of Luther, not indeed at the point where he is treating of this text, but at intervals throughout his whole exposition, especially in his paragraphs<sup>3</sup> on Gal. 2, 19. Finally, Balnaves' interpretation of the acceptability of Cain and Abel before God in the beginning of his 8th chapter is a condensation of that of Luther in an addendum to his exposition of Gal. 3, 10,<sup>4</sup> and agrees in the pithy, but non-scriptural, description of Cain. No one of these instances taken by itself could be relied upon to prove dependence, but their cumulative effect is considerable.

I believe that careful and prolonged investigation would disclose possible sources for nearly all the arguments and interpretations of Balnaves in this one work of Luther's. I make this statement with the greater assurance because I re-read Balnaves with the express purpose of looking for something that Martin Luther could not have written, expecting to find something distinctive of the Zurich reformation which might have come through George Wishart. Remembering Luther's conservatism in matters of worship as contrasted with the Swiss radicalism I considered that this sentence in chapter XXV looked promising, "for no thing from the beginning of the world hath ever bene so displeasing in the sight of God, as to invent any maner of worshipping of him which he hath not commanded." This might well have been an echo of part of Article XXIII<sup>5</sup> of the Swiss Confession of Faith which George Wishart translated for his fellow-countrymen; but it has an even closer parallel in this work of Luther's. For in commenting on Gal. 5, 19, he wrote, "All the highest religious observances, the holinesses and most fervent devotions of those who worship God apart from His word and commandment are idolatry. . . . And the holier and more spiritual they are in appearance the more pernicious and pestilential. . . . He commanded us to believe his word, and to be baptised, etc., and not to devise any new forme of worship."<sup>6</sup>

That this totally unexpected parallel was found may create an erroneous impression, viz., that Balnaves was a mere echo, and nothing more. I believe, on the contrary, that although his mind and heart were

<sup>1</sup> Weimar ed., XL, i, 59.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, XL, ii, 103-4.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, XL, i, 274.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, XL, i, 413-5.

<sup>5</sup> Wodrow: *Miscellany*, I, 21.

<sup>6</sup> Weimar, XL, ii, 110-1.

kindled by Luther's commentary on the Galatians, the incidence of his disputations with his opponents drove him back to the Scriptures to find arguments that Luther had missed, but of which he would have approved. His was not only a mind educated by Luther's teaching, but one emancipated by Luther's faith which found methods of expression of its own. For I must frankly acknowledge that for some notable things, like his reiterated scorn of mere "good zeale and intention" in chapter XXIII, things which Luther might well have said, and certainly implied, in this commentary, I failed to discover any possible source. I have found instances enough, however, to infer definite dependence, and just the kind of dependence that, in the circumstances, might be expected, not verbal quotations in any number, but authentic reminiscences and recollections of arguments and conclusions.

## IX

As a final word, something must be said about the bearing of all this on the history of the Reformation in Scotland. Since the commentary on Galatians was not published until 1535, it is evident that Balnaves' acquaintance with the works of Luther was not a matter merely of his use of his early German opportunities, as I had imagined at the outset. Further, so far as we know, he was never again out of Scotland, save for two fleeting visits to England on official business, between 1535 and the date of his imprisonment in France. This means that, despite all the laws against the importation of Lutheran books, even a work of some size like the commentary on Galatians found its way into Scotland not long after its publication. There were no fewer than five editions between 1535 and 1546, and the most compact of them, the third, ran to 386 quarto pages.

It has been more than once asserted that the Cambridge circle of university men which met at the White Horse Tavern to study the works of Luther had no parallel in Scotland, yet here we have two of Scotland's rising men showing a familiarity with the whole world of Luther's thought, and, in particular, with one outstanding expression of it, which betokens the closest of study. For no mere hasty and surreptitious reading of a banned book will account for the mastery of its contents manifested months, if not years, after it had ceased to be accessible.

This helps to explain the heartiness and unanimity with which the new order was accepted by the Estates of Scotland in 1560, and the small response evoked by the concerted efforts in the years that followed to resuscitate the old. Scotland, it is quite evident, had a large proportion of its population educated in the principles of the Reformation and familiar with its issues. This cannot have been the work of the few brief preaching missions that preceded 1560; it can only be explained by a

more prolonged process of education, to which the temporary freedom of access to a vernacular Bible which Balnaves had helped to secure, contributed perhaps most. But, in this process, a more important part than has hitherto been allowed must be credited to imported books, among which is to be definitely numbered the greatest of the works of Luther's maturity. If the Scottish Reformation owed its final impulse and its mould to Geneva, it owed not only its beginnings, but a large part of its development, to Wittenberg.



